

MYP fundamental concepts

Adolescents are confronted with a vast and often bewildering array of choices. The MYP is designed to provide students with the values and opportunities that will enable them to develop sound judgment. From its beginning, the MYP has been guided by three **fundamental concepts** that are rooted in the IB mission statement. These three fundamental concepts are:

- **holistic learning**—representing the notion that all knowledge is interrelated and that the curriculum should cater to the development of the whole person, the attributes of which are described by the IB learner profile
- **intercultural awareness**—representing the notion that school communities should encourage and promote international-mindedness by engaging with and exploring other cultures, a key feature of international education as reflected in the attributes of the IB learner profile
- **communication**—representing the notion that schools should encourage open and effective communication, important skills that contribute to international understanding as exemplified by the attributes of the IB learner profile.

The IB learner profile and the MYP fundamental concepts provide schools with guidance on their school policies and practices as they implement and develop the programme.

Holistic learning

The MYP emphasizes the disciplined study of subjects which the programme has arranged in eight groups, but requires an approach to teaching and learning that embraces and extends these subjects. The MYP provides a framework for developing links between the subject groups and between the subjects and real-world issues so that students will learn to see knowledge as an interrelated whole. This is one aspect of holistic learning.

Through the contexts for learning provided by the MYP's **areas of interaction** (see the section "The areas of interaction" in this guide), students can come to realize that most real-world problems require insights gained from a variety of disciplines. Students develop skills of inquiry and come to understand the similarities and differences between different approaches to human knowledge. The framework allows students to apply disciplinary knowledge to different contexts. The areas of interaction serve to emphasize the relationships between the subject groups and provide a global view of situations and issues.

Whereas traditional curriculum frameworks have usually described the curriculum in terms of a body of knowledge only, the MYP views the curriculum as meeting the needs of the whole person. This other aspect of holistic learning is exemplified in the provision of objectives not just for knowledge alone. The MYP places great emphasis on:

- the understanding of concepts
- the mastery of skills
- the development of attitudes that can lead to considered and appropriate action.

Through acknowledging and attempting to meet the diverse needs of the student—physical, social, intellectual, aesthetic and cultural—schools ensure that learning in the MYP is significant, provocative, relevant, engaging and challenging.

Intercultural awareness

A principle central to the MYP is that students should develop international-mindedness. They should be encouraged to consider issues from multiple perspectives. IB World Schools are varied: some have many nationalities within the student population and the teaching staff, others represent a more homogeneous community. Whatever the school, opportunities will exist to develop students' attitudes, knowledge, concepts and skills as they learn about their own and others' social, national and ethnic cultures. In this way, intercultural awareness can build understanding and respect.

Developing intercultural awareness concerns the whole school community. This will involve examining the school's organizational structure, the climate within the school, the relationships developed with the community outside, the subject-specific content and the contexts within which teaching takes place. Schools constantly need to evaluate and improve upon policies and procedures in order to facilitate the involvement of students, teachers, administrators and parents in practical activities leading to intercultural awareness. Schools are expected to engage in critical self-reflection and to adapt school culture where necessary: staff must be encouraged to share the vision of intercultural awareness and to exemplify appropriate behaviour.

Communication

The MYP stresses the fundamental importance of communication, verbal and non-verbal, in realizing the aims of the programme. A good command of expression in all its forms is fundamental to learning. In most MYP subject groups, communication is both an objective and an assessment criterion, as it supports understanding and allows student reflection and expression.

The IB learner profile describes a “communicator” as someone who can understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. Students are required to learn at least two languages in the MYP and are encouraged to learn more in many circumstances. Mother tongue maintenance and development is considered essential, and must be supported through school language policy documents. Further details on the importance of this can be found in the IB publication *Learning in a language other than mother tongue in IB programmes*.

Language is integral to exploring and sustaining personal development, cultural identity and intercultural understanding. As well as being the major medium of social communication, it is tightly linked to cognitive growth as it is the means by which meaning and knowledge is negotiated and constructed. All MYP teachers are therefore seen as language teachers.

Chapter summary

The IB mission statement expresses the IB's overall purpose as an organization, promoting and developing programmes of international education. This mission, with which all IB World Schools must align their own mission statements, has over time given rise to the MYP fundamental concepts and the IB learner profile.

The IB learner profile is a statement of the IB beliefs and values. The learner profile describes the kind of student who exemplifies the spirit of the MYP, the kind of student who is engaged in establishing a personal set of values, and who will be developing international-mindedness. The IB believes that all members of the learning community should be striving towards these attributes.

The MYP fundamental concepts describe the learning environment in which the student is operating and provide schools with guidance on developing their school culture. These fundamental concepts of holistic learning, intercultural awareness and communication underscore the IB's commitment to:

- providing a broad and balanced educational experience
- educating the whole child
- understanding and respecting all cultures and valuing multiple forms of expression.